

MEMO

DATE: August 30, 2007

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Jessica Kirchner, Associate Regional Planner, 213.236.1983, kirchner@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: Report on Environmental Components of the Regional Transportation Plan

BACKGROUND:

2008 RTP/RCP PEIR

As part of each planning cycle, SCAG prepares a Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for each Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This PEIR is a “tier one” planning document, which means other agencies may use the information contained in the PEIR to prepare environmental documents for their plans and programs.

Structure

In this cycle, SCAG will prepare a joint PEIR that will evaluate impacts associated with the RTP and the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP). This joint PEIR will include one setting section for each of the two documents and associated appendices as necessary. Staff sees preparation of a joint PEIR as an opportunity to include information compiled in association with planning efforts undertaken through the RCP and also as a chance to create a streamlined comprehensive PEIR that evaluates a broad spectrum of impacts and mitigation measures.

Scope

In general, the PEIR will include an existing conditions section that will describe the region in broad terms (this setting will also serve as the setting for the RCP and will be housed in a separate volume), a description of the methodology used to evaluate impacts, a discussion of the impacts associated with the Plan (as suggested in the *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix G), mitigation measures and any residual impacts. The mitigation measures included in the PEIR will build on the mitigation plan developed under the 2004 RTP and will also include new mitigation developed as part of the RCP.

Also included in the PEIR will be a discussion of alternatives. Staff has preliminarily identified four alternatives to the RTP to be included in the PEIR.

- No Project – a description of what the region would look like if current conditions were allowed to persist (same as RTP baseline)
- Modified 2004 RTP – the 2004 RTP projects and policies with updated socio economic data
- Compass Workshop Scenario/local input – the local input provided by jurisdictions during the most recent round of Compass workshops
- Envision – a land use scenario with enhanced Compass

Although it is likely that these four alternatives will be included in the PEIR, it is possible that additional alternatives or different alternatives will be identified during the PEIR process. As required under CEQA,

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SCAG will include a “reasonable range” of alternatives. However, pursuant to CEQA, these alternatives need not be analyzed at the same level of detail as the Plan itself.

Procedural Requirements

The EIR process includes specific time constraints and milestones that must be met under the law. As required, SCAG prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to inform decision makers, responsible agencies and members of the public of SCAG’s intent to prepare a PEIR. The NOP was released on June 27, 2007 and distributed to over 1,600 agencies and interested parties. SCAG held two scoping meetings during the 30 day comment period to solicit additional input on the scope and content of the PEIR. The meetings were held on July 24th and 25th in Riverside and Los Angeles, respectively. Over 20 individuals attended each of the meetings and provided comments to SCAG on the scope and content of the PEIR. In addition, SCAG received 25 written comments from agencies and interested parties with additional recommendation on the scope of the PEIR. Staff is currently reviewing the comments and will include them in the PEIR as appropriate.

Schedule

Staff anticipates releasing the draft PEIR one to two months after the release of the draft RTP and RCP. The final documents will be adopted concurrently.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

To date, SCAG continues to conduct environmental justice analyses of the potential impacts of the 2008 RTP. The methods being utilized are based on the agency's regional transportation demand model and associated mobile source emissions model. In addition to analyses included in the 2004 RTP, staff will analyze new variables that were taken from comments received from the public.

Additionally, staff has compiled a list of key stakeholders that will be used for environmental justice outreach efforts. This list is comprised of persons and organizations involved with the 2004 RTP, as well as additional persons and organizations that were recommended by AQMD's EJ Working Group.

Staff has scheduled the first EJ Workshop for Wednesday September 19th at SCAG’s downtown Los Angeles office. Additional workshops will be held after the release of the Draft RTP.

AIR QUALITY

Most of the SCAG region is classified as non attainment for some criteria pollutants. As such, SCAG is required to prepare a conformity analysis with each RTP and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). SCAG is currently working with the Air Districts in the region and the California Air Resources Board to set the transportation emissions budgets for the 2008 RTP.

FISCAL IMPACT:

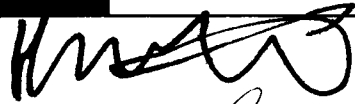
Staff work performed in preparation for the 2008 RTP/RCP PEIR is included in the Overall Work Program (08-020.SCGS1 Environmental Planning and 08-025.SCGS1 Air Quality Conformity)

Reviewed by:


Division Manager

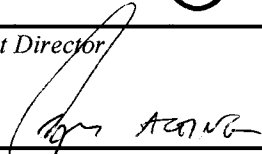
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Reviewed by:



Department Director

Reviewed by:



Chief Financial Officer